

Template for Contributions to the Encyclopedia of the UN Sustainable Development Goals

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TRANSPARENT GOVERNMENTS, SOCIAL INNOVATION AND THEIR ROLE IN ACHIEVING THE SDGs

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B. Synonyms (*if applicable*)

Participation and accountability; Digital government; Institution building

C. Definitions

In order to define a transparent government, we first make a brief distinction between Government and governance and then present a definition of transparency.

Government: When a Government is elected, an Administration is selected to run the day-to-day affairs of Government. Government refers to the institution and Administration to the processes that sustain the institution. In this sense, the boundaries of Government and Administration coincide (UN 2020).

Governance: Over time, the conception of Government has evolved and what now defines an institution goes beyond its processes (its Administration). Each institution perceives itself as one among many other institutions, creating a system. This ecosystem of different institutions shares a decision-making process and is referred to as a governance system.

Transparent government: Themes currently identified in the UN's website (UN 2020) that define a transparent 'public administration' coincide with those that define a 'transparent government'. Its foundation lays on the assumption that the Government is an institution that is part of a more comprehensive system and not an institution that is exclusively defined by its internal processes. This impacts the boundaries of the definition of 'public administration' that now stretch beyond its processes. Processes are impacted by the notion of ecosystem where there is an increasing role of technologies. In the context of Agenda 2030, government transparency prioritises the following themes: participation and accountability; digital government; institution building; public service innovation and transformation (UN 2020).

Transparency: The United Nations defines 'transparency' as decisions enforced according to laws and regulations, that are freely available and directly accessible. Information that is provided also needs to be enough and should be easily understandable in any form or media used (UNESCAP 2009).

Introduction

In the late 1990s, research on transparency, accountability and corruption in the context of public sector emerged. This research was motivated by heavy criticism concerning the presuppositions of the New Public Management (NPM) and traditional theories of public administration (Pedersen, Sehested, & Sørensen 2010) and

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offered a new perspective. According to this new paradigm, interactive collaboration between state, market, and society, was vital. Consequently, the importance of accountability, transparency, open government, and the democratic rule of law should be reinforced (Lyrio, Lunkes & Taliani 2018).

The concept of transparency itself is an old concept. It started being discussed back in the French Revolution, and it was built from an idea of representative democracy, culminating in an idea of participatory democracy. What was emphasised was the importance of the relationship between the government and society (Meijer 2015).

There is no consensual definition of transparency but, for example, Meijer (2013) has defined it as “the availability of information about an actor who allows other actors to monitor his work and performance in an institutional relation of exchange of information”. For a state-of-the-art literature review on ‘transparency’ see Lyrio, Lunkes & Taliani (2018).

According to Matheus & Janssen (2019), public administration literature tends to be focused on factors such as participation and trust (see Grimmelikhuijsen et al. 2013). In contrast, information systems literature focuses on factors such as user interface, user experience, and data quality (see Buie & Murray 2012). Digital government literature attempts to bridge these elements. This is becoming increasingly relevant as the role of technology, open access and privacy and security become pressing issues in the context of public administration.

The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are an integral part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted in September 2015 by the UN General Assembly (UNGA 2015). The SDGs aim to update the 8 Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), established during UN’s Millennium Summit (2000), with the adoption of United Nations Millennium Declaration that expired in 2015 (Ki-moon 2013).

Two main differences exist between the Millennium Development Goals and SDGs. The first is that SDGs broaden MDGs’ scope of action covering a significantly higher number of areas. The second is that the 2030 Agenda is the first UN agenda that envisions accomplishing its goals not only in the Global South but also in the Global North. The global ambition of this agenda is confirmed not only thematically but also geographically. A sustainable development (economic, environmental and social) implies an integrated global effort.

How does such a broad perspective of global governance, based on goal-setting, translate into implementation? How to go from a global strategy to local action? Many remain sceptic about the possibility of accomplishing such a broad scope and question the Agenda’s utility and effectiveness. (see Kanie et al. 2017)²

However, this Agenda is aware of its ambition, and the focus on the mobilisation of resources is unprecedented. Political support is crucial, but it is not sufficient to assure the successful accomplishment of SDGs. Conscious of the importance of societies’ many other actors, the mobilisation encompasses all: civil society, financial, and business actors (Young 2017).

This broad involvement of society is particularly relevant when it comes to indicators. To each SDG, the UN has associated several indicators that allow to measure and account for a successful accomplishment of the goal. Nevertheless, each country is given the possibility to adapt the indicators and create a set of indicators that is relevant to assess the goal according to the country’s needs. Recognising the importance of local circumstances, non-governmental organisations, regional governments, and municipalities can also develop additional indicators. This possibility values bottom-up approaches, validating them as key to improve both data collection and monitoring of global development objectives (Pintér, Kok, Almassy 2017, p. 112).

The transition from global governance normative principles issued by the UN to rules and norms adopted by countries is not linear. Nevertheless, the 2030 Agenda is a powerful strategic document that confirms its signatories’ agreement on the importance of *working towards* those goals, together.

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Governments have an essential role as mediators in this transition from global principles, to national rules, also, in supporting (bottom-up) and promoting (top-down) local actions that actively contribute to SDGs. As a mediator, the more transparent a government is, the more actively it contributes to a successful accomplishment of SDGs. Its dynamics permeate any other organisation and the society at large, and therefore it should strive to embody transparency, accountability, and compliance.

Aligned with SDG 16, a 'transparent government' aims at the implementation of mechanisms that promote Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions. This not also contributes to a successful accomplishment of the goal's corresponding targets being also relevant to all other goals.

Two general features characterise a 'transparent government':

- 1) A shared and collaborative *decision-making process* involving the government, relevant actors and citizens, at all three policy-making levels: *design, monitoring and evaluation*;
- 2) Access to information by all parties and society at large in order to facilitate and legitimise the decision-making process.

In short, in a 'transparent government' information is the keyword and rules must be made known to all, accessible at any time, by anyone, at every stage of a process. Also, rules are defined, implemented, monitored and assessed involving relevant actors and citizens, in a continuous process of information exchange.

In government transparency, the role of technology and open data becomes increasingly important as a way of promoting accountability and facilitating compliance. However, matters of data privacy and security must be accounted for.

The subsequent sections will distinguish between the concepts of Government and governance; identify *Actors: Participation and accountability*; investigate mechanisms that promote *Facilitation: Digital government*; define *Values: Institution building*; recognise the importance of *Partnerships: Public service innovation transformation*; and assess the role of cities to SDGs, *From global, to national, to regional, to local: The Growing Relevance of Cities and Urban*.

Government and governance

The distinction between government and governance is useful to demonstrate the dynamics between institutions and the processes involved related to those same institutions. Since the emergence of the concept of Nation-state (18th century), Government and governance have been perceived as synonyms (Hobsbawm 2012). Government was identified with an institution: the State. Governance was exclusively about the processes involved in making the State work. The main reason for this overlap is rooted in an idea of democracy conceptualised in terms of elections and voting (Pierre and Peters 2020, p. 3). Citizens' involvement and participation starts and ends at the voting booth and between elections, the government is free to act as the sole decision-maker. This is a decision-making process that privileges a top-down approach.

Gradually, the concept of democracy itself started changing, and questions about the representativity started growing: where those elected by voters genuinely representing the interests of citizens who had elected them? Government and governance started drifting apart, leading to an ever-growing discussion, which continues up until today, about the boundaries of each concept. The ambition is to be able to determine where

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does the government end and governance starts. Both concepts became so distant that some argue the radical perspective that governments are now obsolete institutions and that governance should replace governments (Bell 2017). This is the most extreme form of a bottom-up approach in decision-making where citizens and a network of institutions are perceived as equally powerful, collaborating in order to decide X, and where institutions are perceived as obsolete.

How did we get here and what has contributed to the slow parting of Government and governance? Two main reasons can be pointed out. The first is the context created by the establishment of supranational institutions (like the UN) and globalisation. The State went from being hierarchically the institution that held the ultimate power and had the last word, to becoming an institution that needs to make decisions about its future in a collaborative manner and close dialogue with other countries and institutions, taking them as partners. The second main reason for Government and governance drifting apart is the growing role of participatory mechanisms that have been successfully permeating the founding concept of democracy itself. If governments want to govern successfully, they need to accommodate continuous forms of participation of several other society's actors (citizens, Non-Governmental Organisations, universities, etc.). The UN clearly states: "Government is one of the actors in governance". (UNESCAP 2009) This means that the decision-making process needs to incorporate other perspectives and not exclusively that of the Government.

The United Nations defines good governance as "the structures and processes whereby a social organisation - from a family to corporate business to international institution - steers itself, ranging from centralised control to self-regulation" (UN 2016a, p. iv). The United Nations has also attributed eight major characteristics to good governance: "participatory, consensus-oriented, accountable, transparent, responsive, effective and efficient, equitable and inclusive and follows the rule of law. It assures that corruption is minimised; the views of minorities are taken into account and that the voices of the most vulnerable in society are heard in decision-making" (UNESCAP 2009).

What is at stake in the dynamics between government and governance is how to find a balance between both, one where the government is perceived as the institution that supplies the needed direction to the society, but it is not the only one making decisions.

The European Commission defines good governance as "the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resources for development" (EC 2014, p.8) considering it the basis and ultimate objective of institutional capacity building. It also affirms good governance as key to build trust and social capital, confirming that states with a high level of social capital tend to perform better economically.

A relevant distinction is also between outputs and outcomes. Output is the result of a process produced by the activities developed by a given institution. An outcome has a broader scope and extends towards the future, being the level of achievement and impact that occurs because of the activity of the aforesaid institution. A transparent government needs to make sure that it acts as a role model both its outputs (its processes) and its outcomes (where Government perceives itself as one among other actors, as part of an ecosystem).

Governments should therefore be aware of their leadership role, perceiving itself as the driving force of positive change based on principles of equity, justice and inclusiveness, promoted with transparency.

We now describe each of the four themes related to 'public administration' mentioned above that are key to promote and should be held accountable for a transparent government.▯

Actors: Participation and accountability

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Auditing the Sustainable Development Goals

In order to strengthen national control mechanisms, Supreme audit institutions (SAIs) were established in a country-based order to follow up and review SDGs. UN's General Assembly acknowledged the role of SAIs in promoting an efficient and accountable public administration conducive to the implementation of development priorities and the SDGs (see UN-General Assembly 2011, 2014a, 2014b). It has also strongly suggested that Member State and relevant United Nations institutions should continue their cooperation with the International Organisation of Supreme Audit Institutions (INTOSAI).

INTOSAI has a special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). It provides an institutionalised framework for SAIs to promote knowledge development and transfer, improve government auditing worldwide and enhance professional capacities, standing and influence of member SAIs in their countries. To follow up and review SDGs is among INTOSAI's goals and in 2016 it has launched the Auditing the Sustainable Development Goals programme (INTOSAI 2020).

The programme provides guidance on how to audit SDGs preparedness and over 70 SAIs and one sub-national audit institution, from all regions, participate.

UN/INTOSAI seminars have been organised regularly, promoting a close connection between the General Secretariat and the UN.

Combating corruption

Corruption is one of the key themes within SDGs 16 that is taken very seriously in the 2030 Agenda. Corruption is one of the key themes within SDGs 16 that is taken very seriously in the 2030 Agenda. The current understanding of corruption and a discussion of factors affecting the risk of corruption was recently addressed by Liu (2019). From the latest research, it can be stated that scholars began to tend to use the real raw data rather than the perception of data to study the corruption of a particular country or region when they use empirical analysis method. For this tendency to continue, the corruption index measurement and the international comparability of the macro data need to continue to be studied and perfected.

Corruption has been identified as one of the significant components hindering sustainable development affecting the public and private sector (Frolova et al. 2019; Sartor and Beamish 2019), peace and security (Basabose 2019). It negatively impacts trust in government, contributes to social inequality and poverty. It is also a problem that has severe costs: \$1,000 billion are paid in bribes per year; Corruption can cost a country up to 17 Percent of its GDP, and US\$1.8 trillion is the volume of illicit financial flows from Africa between 1970 and 2008 (UNDP 2020).

According to the UN, corruption is "the abuse or misuse of public power for private benefit can take many forms – bribery, extortion, influence peddling, nepotism, fraud or embezzlement" (UN 2020).

The main document providing guidelines to combating corruption is the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC, A/RES/58/4). It is an exceptional document in the sense that it is the only legally binding international anti-corruption multilateral treaty, signed by 140 countries. It was adopted in October 2003 and entered into force in December 2005 (UNCAC 2020).

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Four articles specifically address corruption in the public sector: Article 7: Public sector; Article 8: Codes of conduct for public officials; Article 9: Public procurement and management of public finances; Article 10: Public reporting.

These have contributed to advocacy and research on national and regional codes of conducts of the public service, constitutional rights concerning citizen engagement in public affairs, open government data, national e-procurement development, the role of supreme audit institutions, as well as institutional arrangement and mechanisms in promoting open, transparent and inclusive participation and decision-making in development.

In broader terms, the Doha Declaration Global Programme (DDGP) is also worth mentioning, having been adopted in 2015, in the 13th United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice held in Qatar. It calls for the integration of crime prevention and criminal justice across all themes and programmes promoted by the UN, acknowledging the importance of the rule of law to sustainable development.

The Doha Declaration encompasses four specific components: strengthening **judicial integrity** and the prevention of corruption; fostering **prisoner rehabilitation** and social integration; **preventing youth crime** through sports; and encouraging a culture of the rule of law in schools and universities through the initiative 'Education for Justice' (DDGP 2020).

In order to combat corruption, UN Office of Drugs and Crime works closely with United Nations Development Program (UNDP), Tiri, GTZ, the Basel Institute on Governance, the Huairou Commission and the Institute of Governance Studies of Bangladesh.

The European Union has high standard legislation that either specifically addresses corruption or that incorporates anti-corruption elements in other sectoral legislation. The Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union has an unrestricted right to act in the field of anti-corruption policies. Article 83, recognises corruption as a 'euro-crime' and therefore, the EU holds legislating powers to regulate this area. In 2010, the Stockholm Programme was adopted, and the EC was given a political mandate to measure efforts in the fight against corruption and to develop a comprehensive EU anti-corruption policy, in close cooperation with the Council of Europe Group of States against Corruption (GRECO). The EU Anti-Corruption Report, published in 2014, was crucial to assess how corruption affects countries differently, therefore requiring different anti-corruption policies. The following year, all EU countries designated a national contact point to facilitate information exchange on anti-corruption policy to encourage and better implement laws and policies against corruption. For more information on the EU's anti-corruption past and present framework, see EC (2020).

Transparency International - the global coalition against corruption (TI 2020), is an independent, non-governmental, not-for-profit also relevant to the anti-corruption theme. It is a global movement working in over 100 countries to end the injustice of corruption, promoting transparency, accountability and integrity at all levels and across all sectors of society. It features 60 Advocacy and Legal Advice Centres (ALACs) that provide free and confidential legal advice, and allow people to report corruption safely, access public information and demands transparent, responsive, accountable government institutions.

Since its foundation in 1995, the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) is Transparency International's flagship research product, becoming the leading global indicator of public sector corruption. In 2012, Transparency International revised the methodology, and now it allows for a comparison of scores from one year to the next.²

On 9 December, the world marks International Anti-Corruption Day.

E-participation & citizen engagement

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E-participation uses Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) to encourage citizen participation, strengthening collaboration between government and citizens. Since 2003, in order to assess citizen engagement, the UN created the E-Participation Index (EPI), the first to evaluate e-participation initiatives worldwide. (UN 2016b, p. 49-77, 141) There have been critics claiming that the EPI assesses e-participation initiatives on the government side only and neglects the society side, which includes all kinds of civil e-participation initiatives. Some argue that political rights and civil liberties should be viewed as the most important criteria with which to evaluate e-participation initiatives. (Pirannejad et al. 2019) For a discussion on e-Participation, see Zimmermann (2016).

However, in 2013, the United Nations' Public Institutions and Digital Government Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), created the METEP Toolkit (Measurement and Evaluation Tool for Citizen Engagement and e-Participation Toolkit) and then developed a self-assessment questionnaire in response to an emerging need for more robust and deeper participation in citizen engagement by all stakeholders. This instrument was created identifying as its assumptions that engaging citizens is beneficial to governments throughout the public policy process: i) at the early stages to enhance public problem definition and to identify acceptable policy options; ii) through the implementation stages by facilitating dialogue to support policy inclusiveness and iii) to receive feedback while monitoring and evaluating public policy programmes and their outcomes, which is key to continuous improvements in the delivery of public goods and services. (UN 2020) An evaluation of the success of METEP was performed in 2016 by the United Nations' Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA). Among its conclusions, it addresses the importance of internet access to accomplish 2030 Agenda's goals, particularly in the least developed countries (UN 2016b, p. 76-78).

Facilitation: Digital government

E-Government

The public value of e-government is understood as citizens' expectations from e-government. Recently, Twizeyimana & Andersson (2019) have identified six main dimensions concerning the public value of e-government, having associated each of them with Key Performance Indicators (KPIs): 1) Improved Public Services; 2) Improved Administrative Efficiency; 3) Open Government (OG) capabilities; 4) Improved Ethical Behaviour and Professionalism; 5) Improved Trust and Confidence in Government; 6) Improved Social Value and Well-Being.

The 17 SDGs are closely intertwined, aiming to highlight that in order to achieve sustainable development (economic, environmental and social) it is necessary to implement an integrated policy-making approach. This implies to connect sectors and sub-sectors through policies that uses as its guidelines SDGs. This Whole-of-Government (WoG) policy strategy aims to answer more effectively to concrete and local problems. In order to contribute to this strategy, e-Government and online service delivery are perceived as vital to bridge the gap between institutions (UN 2016b, p. 5).

In 2003, only 18 countries declared to have an online presence. Since 2014, all 193 Member States of the UN have delivered some form of an online presence. However, just like there is a digital availability of ICT divide, there is an e-government divide. That is why it is essential to assure access and make institutions more accountable and responsive to people's needs (UN 2016b, p. 6).

METER (Measurement and Evaluation Tool for E-Government Readiness) is an online, interactive tool to assist governments and decision-makers at any level throughout the world in developing, monitoring, refining and improving the context within which information and communication technologies are used to transform government. In a sense, it creates the context for e-Government. It was created by the United Nations,

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Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Division for Public Administration and Development Management, in 2010. For evaluation and vision of what e-Governance should become see UN (2016, p. 4-6). To consult the UN's past e-Government surveys, since 2001, go to visit (UN 2020: Themes, Digital Government, E-Government).

Open Government Data and Services

The Division for Public Institutions and Digital Government (DPIDG) is a division of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA). It focuses on analysing and supporting efforts to make institutions inclusive, effective, accountable and well equipped to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as reflected in SDG 16 (DPIDG 2020).

DPIDG has been conducting research on Open Government Data (OGD) since 2010, allowing citizens to monitor data streams, thereby improving the accountability and transparency of government. Online government services (e-Government) lead to more participation from citizens in the decision-making process to address policy issues (e-Participation). In 2013, it created an evolving tool, the Guidelines on Open Government Data for Citizen Engagement, a practical and easy-to-understand guideline for policymakers and technologists that can be used to understand, design, implement and sustain open government data initiatives. Initiatives of the project OGD can be followed here (UN OGD 2020).

World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS)

Hosting the WSIS confirms UN's conviction that ICTs are a determinant factor to accomplish the 2030 Agenda's SDGs. It first took place in Geneva in 2003; then, a second one was conducted in 2005. Both addressed a shared commitment to building a people-centric, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society where everyone can create and share information. In 2015, the United Nations General Assembly reviewed the progress over the past ten years and considered the future of the WSIS (a process also called WSIS+10 Review). In 2019, the DPIDG organised Facilitation Meeting, in Geneva, titled "Digital Government for Empowering People and Ensuring Inclusiveness and Equality". The United Nations E-Government Survey methodology was discussed, and participants presented the latest trends and developments on the promotion of ICTs for development as well as on international and regional cooperation (WSIS 2019).

Values: Institution building

To promote the values of effective, accountable and inclusive institutions is among the characteristics that define a transparent government. Why are these values significant? We go back to good governance and briefly dwell on the strong causality that was established between good governance and economic growth. (Holmberg et al. 2009; Raza et al. 2019) There are two ways in which good governance has been defined. Liberal economists consider good governance as market-enhancing and trust that governance can reduce transaction costs and enable markets to work more effectively. Heterodox economists have stressed the role of growth-enhancing governance "which focuses on governance capacities to overcome entrenched market failures in allocating assets, acquiring productivity-enhancing technologies and maintaining political stability in contexts of rapid social transformation" (Khan 2007). The liberal approach has received more attention than the heterodox, but whichever way, it is bad governance undermines economic growth. ☐

In order to assess governance worldwide, the World Bank has developed a group of indicators and created a database, available online: Worldwide Governance Indicators. It reports aggregate and individual

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governance indicators for over 200 countries and territories over the period 1996–2018, and it has identified six dimensions of governance: Voice and Accountability; Political Stability and Absence of Violence; Government Effectiveness; Regulatory Quality; Rule of Law; Control of Corruption (World Bank 2020a).

This is important to determine that governance, transparent institutions and a transparent government, are not a secondary matter. It is not a given that economic growth leads to good governance but conversely, it has been demonstrated that good governance leads the way to economic growth. Values can, therefore be the foundation for growth.

Partnerships: Public service innovation transformation

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development calls for transformation through enhanced creativity and innovation in the public service at all levels of governance and Public administration. In the words of Secretary-General António Guterres, “Public service is a critical component for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) [...] we need to pioneer new approaches, work differently, take risks and innovate” (UN 2020).

This encompasses to design activities that empower Public sector leaders, human resource managers and Public Servants through advice, research and capacity development in the public service promoting creativity and innovation. To promote this, the United Nations Public Service Awards program was created, the most prestigious international recognition of excellence in public service. The UN Public Service Day is celebrated since 2003 with an Awards Ceremony, receiving an increasing number of submissions from all around the world.

Kattel (et al. 2014) have worked on an extensive literature review in order to assess different definitions of innovation in the context of the public sector, also discussing different ways to measure social innovation (initiatives that intersect private and public sector, p. 33). It stresses that if evaluation and measurement of social innovation are performed “from a purely quantitative perspective, disregarding qualitative properties, then it is likely that a range of factors facilitating social innovation (e.g. social networks and trust existing in local communities) will not be accounted for” (p. 33).

The 2020 United Nations Public Service Awards (UNPSA) is now open for nominations under the following categories: 1) delivering inclusive and equitable services for all; 2) promoting integrated mechanisms for sustainable development; 3) developing transparent and accountable public institutions; 4) promoting digital transformation in the public sector, and 5) promoting gender-responsive public services to achieve the SDGs.

Public service innovation transformation is closely connected to SDG 17, Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalise the global partnership for sustainable development. Innovation creates more resilient public institutions, permeable and connected with other institutions. This brings institution-centred governments closer to a network-governance Government, where people are at the centre.

From global, to national, to regional, to local: The Growing Relevance of Cities and Urban Development

One of the critical components of an integrative and WoG public policy approach is “smart cities”. Simply put, the “term generally refers to the management of urban environments through ICT” (UN 2016, p. 11).

The smart city concept promotes the active participation of citizens through ICTs. Active participation can be defined as a relationship based on partnership with government in which citizens actively engage in defining the process and content of policy-making (OECD, 2001). While this can bring several social, environmental and

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economic benefits in the way we manage energy, water, transport systems, etc., increasingly better regulatory frameworks that promote transparency, privacy and security are needed (Zuboff 2019).

The implementation of smart cities is particularly relevant because, in 2018, 55.3 Percent of the world population lives in cities and by 2030, the number is expected to increase to 60.4 Percent. More importantly, not only the general population is becoming more urban but also the density of urban centres is changing. In 2018 there were 33 megacities (cities with over 10 million inhabitants), and 27 of them were located in the less developed regions or the "global South". China alone was home to 6 megacities in 2018, while India had 5. Nine of the ten cities projected to become megacities between 2018 and 2030 are located in developing countries (UN 2018, p. 3, 5).

It is expected that ICTs will be able to contribute to managing such large agglomerations furthermore, that it will assure a constant flow of communication bridging national, regional and local scales in such a way that cultural traditions and identities are respected and preserved.

Megacities and the 'smart city' model will be increasingly crucial elements that will encourage the design, implementation and monitoring of new governance systems having the potential to stimulate social innovation and government transparency. Information and open data tend to permeate our urban surrounding environments, encouraging a constant exchange between citizens and Government. The use of ICT impacts not only infrastructures but also the creation of an enabling environment, with a focus on institutional strengthening and capacity building (UN 2016b, p. 96).

Public data, and their re-use, are vital resources for social innovation and economic growth. Open Data provides new opportunities for governments to collaborate with citizens and evaluate public services by giving citizens access to data about those services (World Bank 2020b). Governments have a crucial role in all this making sure that access to information and its use is readily available and secure, being processed according to transparent dynamics.

Concluding Summary

Just like the concept of democracy itself, the definition of Government and transparency is ever-evolving. However, the principles that support these concepts growingly raise the bar on values like equity, equality and justice, encompassing more actors and citizens around the world.

In this process, it is crucial that the Government assumes a leadership role encouraging the participation of relevant actors and the society at large. This will allow for more robust institutions and the promotion of peace. ☐

The combat to corruption is a critical theme in SDGs and a central topic to a successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda having been established a causal link between lower levels of corruption and a more sustainable development.

The circulation of information at different hierarchical scales, among different actors and between different sectors through technology use, and open data systems, contribute to promote the distribution of power and decision-making. A constant and renewed approach to finding mechanisms that promote E-Participation and E-Government is encouraged. However, actions need to be taken to decrease the digital gap, promoting more generalised access worldwide to technologies and the Internet. Also, transparency and open data access bring the added risk of raising security and privacy issues that should be accounted for.

SDG 16 is one of the most challenging goals when it comes to developing indicators. Therefore, existing indicators like EPI and WGI are essential to evaluate progress. New indicators should be developed by each

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country concerning SDG in order to monitor and implement a concrete measure that leads to stronger institutions and promote peace.

Initiatives like UN Public Service Day value the role of people within public institutions. Their values and work ethics express the institution's values. The quality and values of public institutions should be strengthened through partnerships with other actors contributing to constant learning and upgrading workers skills.

As urban population raises worldwide and urban development evolves towards higher densities, the use of ICTs is expected to become more relevant propelling the 'smart city' model. These impact infrastructures and Government and governance systems, having the ability to positively impact economic growth and promote innovation. However, security and privacy issues should be accounted for.

Cross-References (*if applicable*)

Include a list of related entries from the encyclopaedia here that may be of further interest to the readers.

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